

Danny Barnes & Friends perform at WOW Hall on Friday.



Raw and Honest

Bluegrass bard plays the WOW Hall; folk paradise at Paradiso.

On the surface, bluegrass musician **Danny Barnes** might seem like a walking contradiction. Here's a man who was born and raised in a small central Texas town, then headed north for the bright lights and big city life near Seattle. He was a founding member of Austin, Texas's Bad Livers, ostensibly a bluegrass outfit but one that infused bluegrass with the energy of punk. Here's a man who can cover the traditional tune "Keep My Skillet Good and Greasy," then quote the prose of Nathaniel Hawthorne or the poetry of William Blake.

I recently spoke to Barnes by phone from his home in Port Hadlock, Wash., and he revealed his take on lyricism, musical quality, and his pride in his new CD, *Dirt on the Angel*. The album, released Aug. 12, features 11 Barnes originals, one co-written with Darol Anger and three covers, including Beck's "Loser."

Barnes reveals a shift in his writing style on *Angel*: "I do spend a lot more time editing myself when I'm writing. I'm learning more about how words work together, much like how instruments work together like musical notes of a passage. In the past my lyrics were sort of driven by the music. On this record, really, the lyrics are the important part of the song."

Barnes began recording CDs with Bad Livers in 1991. Nearly 15 years later Barnes says he "still feels like a student" and it's this reality that keeps him going. "I'm always learning and practicing. I get a lot of encouragement from my fans who tell me that I'm doing something right," he says. "I'm definitely getting more dialed into what I want to do musically," reveals Barnes. "I work at it. I take lessons. I study every day. To me the CD represents continued growth as a musician and a lot of maturity in terms of the lyrical content, the poetry of the music, the production aesthetic, the playing, and even the other players I brought in. It's sort of the apex of 32 years of trying to make music."

Joining Barnes on *Angel* are renowned

jazz guitarist Bill Frisell, Rolling Stones keyboardist Chuck Leavell, violinist Darol Anger, banjoist Dirk Powell, and Amy Denio contributing voice, among others. "I had this vision for this 'orchestra' that had a pan-American type sound. There's a lot of American music represented on this CD, like classical and jazz influences, bluegrass, old time, country, avant-garde modern stuff. There's really a cross-section of American music. Some of the rhythms and harmonies pre-date written music, and then all the way up to the modern stuff," explains Barnes. When Barnes performs, it's typically just him and his instruments, stripped down, raw, and honest. See Barnes Friday at WOW Hall.

Missoula, Mont.-based folksinger **Amy Martin** will perform for the third time at Café Paradiso on Sunday, Oct. 19. Amy found a great trust in the fall of 1999 and decided to become a full-time musician. Her choice has been rewarded by four albums released since then and a growing base of appreciative fans who enjoy her sweet but unpolished voice and sincere approach.

Martin lives close to the earth and appreciates the small and simple things in life that can seem like miracles when they come at unexpected times. For instance, her community of supporters and fans donated money to enable Martin to record her second and third albums. She found herself overwhelmed by the generosity she experienced, and in the spirit of giving back is donating all of the proceeds from the sale of her third album, *This Fall*, to health and education projects in Afghanistan. Martin has recently released "Live in Missoula," a love song to her community and home in Missoula.

Martin has a special connection to the Eugene area. Traveling through Eugene in 1999, Martin had a "musical epiphany" and decided to pursue her dream of being a musician. Through some local connections she landed a gig at Café Paradiso and never looked back.

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